

# New and noteworthy records of birds from the middle Magdalena valley of Colombia

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For four centuries the Río Magdalena was the main conduit for commerce and communications between the Caribbean and much of the densely-populated interior of Colombia, including the capital city of Bogotá. Although much of the Magdalena valley had been converted to agricultural land or pastures as early as the eighteenth century, the very wet middle portion (between about 5° and 7°N) remained heavily forested until relatively recently. Fuelled by glowing (and unrealistic) reports of the region's natural wealth (e.g. Pérez-Arbeláez 1938), in the 1960s and 1970s the Colombian government sponsored a massive, internationally financed railroad-building and colonization programme that resulted in the elimination of nearly four million ha of forest in little over a decade. At present, the valley floor in this region is mostly converted to low-grade pastures on rolling terrain, while the flat alluvial portions are mostly used for mechanized cotton and rice production; forest is reduced to scattered, small, usually highly disturbed patches, especially along streams. On the rugged Andean slopes on both sides of the valley, deforestation was more patchy but reached a peak in the 1970s. Since then, much of the steep, eroded terrain has been at least partly abandoned, producing a mosaic of intermittently cultivated areas, poor pastures, second-growth scrub and low woodland, and occasional patches of mostly disturbed remnant forest in steep-sided canyons and along ridgetops.

Although some of the first ornithological observations and collections in Colombia were made in the Magdalena valley (as summarized by Chapman 1917, Meyer de Schauensee 1964, Olivares 1966 and Mantilla & Díaz 1992), during much of this century the region has usually been bypassed by ornithologists in favour of more pristine areas. Conversely, the effects of the removal of the middle Magdalena forests on the avifauna have either gone practically unremarked or have been somewhat exaggerated (e.g. Graves 1987, Collar *et al.* 1992): there is a noteworthy vacuum of reliable recent information on the avifauna, particularly as regards the status of several species endemic to the region.

Since late 1989 we have made a number of visits to the foothills and adjacent lowlands of the middle Magdalena valley in the departments of Caldas, Cundinamarca, Boyacá and Tolima, in the course of which we have obtained new data on the status or distribution of some 75 species, as compared with the information in Hilty & Brown (1986), the most recently published summary. Most of our data were obtained at the following sites (dates and observers in parentheses):

- a) Norcasia, Caldas (5°34'N, 74°54'W)—secondary and relict, disturbed primary forest on steep slopes overlooking the Río La Miel, in the vicinity of the CHEC construction camp above the site of a proposed hydroelectric project, *ca.* 300–500 m asl (9–11 Dec 1989—LR & B. Ortiz; 1–8 Oct 1994—FGS).
- b) Tasajos, Municipality of Samaná, Caldas (5°29'N, 74°57'W)—disturbed relict forest and secondary woodland along the Río La Miel and adjacent ridges; second-growth scrub, pastures and scattered groves on slopes, 500–750 m asl (12 Dec 1989, 1–4 Jun 1990—LR & B. Ortiz; 16–19, 24–25 Mar 1994—FGS).
- c) La Victoria, Caldas (5°25'N, 74°55'W)—most observations made in the watershed reserve of El Boquerón, on steeply-sloping terrain on a bluff overlooking the town, covered by tall but disturbed forest and old second-growth woodland, 850–1,020 m asl; also in the forested gorge of the Río Guarinó just S of town at 650–800 m asl (12–14 Dec 1989—LR & B. Ortiz; 29–31 May 1990—FGS, LR & B. Ortiz; 20–24 Mar 1994—FGS).
- d) Guadualito, Municipality of Yacopí, Cundinamarca (5°33'N, 74°20'W)—remnant forest patches on hilltops, especially Loma Colorada, 1,150–1,220 m asl, and on the higher ridge of Fila Chapón (1,400–1,500 m asl, as well as second-growth woodland and scrub on steep slopes (25–29 Oct, 4–5 Nov 1995—FGS & A. Rodríguez).
- e) El Vergel, Municipality of La Victoria, Boyacá (5°35'N, 74°17'W)—a large area of secondary and heavily disturbed remnant forest with patches of low second growth and small cultivated areas, on steep slopes overlooking the Quebrada Carros, 740–850 m asl (30–31 Oct 1995—FGS & A. Rodríguez).
- f) Monte del Diablo, vereda Gramales, Municipality of La Victoria, Boyacá (5°38'N, 74°18'W)—a large (*ca.* 400 ha) patch of relatively lightly disturbed remnant forest, mostly on steep-sided ridges, long used by local residents as a hunting preserve, 700–880 m asl (1–3 Nov 1998—FGS & A. Rodríguez).
- g) Puerto Romero and vicinity, Municipality of Puerto Boyacá, Boyacá (5°51'N, 74°21'W)—patches of remnant gallery forest at Hacienda Balcones, and pastures with scattered trees, scrub, and a tree-bordered stream near the Techint pipeline construction camp on flat to gently rolling terrain at the foot of the Serranía de las Quinchas, a small spur of the Eastern Andes jutting N into the Magdalena valley, 350–410 m asl (20–23 Sep 1996—CIB & A. Rodríguez; 19–24 Apr 1997—FGS; 23–27 Sep, 2–3 Oct 1997—FGS & CIB).
- h) Vereda La Fiebre, Municipality of Puerto Boyacá, Boyacá (5°52'N, 74°20'W)—a steep-sided valley in the foothills of the Serranía de las Quinchas; lightly disturbed primary forest on steep ridges and the upper slopes, secondary woodland, scrub, cultivated areas and pastures on the valley floor and gentler slopes; also a patch of disturbed forest on a ridge overlooking the adjacent watershed of the Quebrada la Cristalina, 450–750 m asl (17–19 Sep 1996—CIB

& A. Rodríguez; 20–24 and 27–28 Apr 1997—FGS; 23–27 Sep, 2–3 Oct 1997—FGS & CIB).

- i) La Grilla (Puesto Zipa), Municipality of Otanche, Boyacá (5°49'N, 74°18'W)—very wet, lightly to moderately disturbed cloud forest, tall secondary woodland bordering pastures, rustic coffee plantations, mostly on steep slopes on the crest of the Serranía de las Quinchas, 1,300–1,500 m asl (25–26 Sep 1996—CIB & A. Rodríguez; 25–26 Apr 1997—FGS; 28 Sep–1 Oct 1997—FGS & CIB; 3–6 Dec 1998—FGS).

These and other localities mentioned in the text are illustrated in Fig. 1.

We conducted visual and auditory observations and mist-netting at all sites and made a limited number of tape recordings at La Victoria, Guadualito, Monte del Diablo, La Fiebre and La Grilla; several specimens were collected with a shotgun at Guadualito, El Vergel, Monte de Diablo, La Fiebre and La Grilla. A complete list of species recorded in the Guadualito–El Vergel–Monte del Diablo area is given by Stiles & Rodríguez (1995) and a similar list for Puerto Romero–Serranía de las Quinchas will be published elsewhere (Stiles & Bohórquez, in prep.). All specimens mentioned are housed in the collection of the Instituto de Ciencias Naturales in Bogotá except several marked (J), which are in the collection of the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogotá.

#### **GREAT TINAMOU** *Tinamus major*

The deep, mellow trilled song of this species was heard several times at dawn on 25–27 September 1997 in forests in the upper part of vereda La Fiebre; the species is well known to local hunters. Not previously recorded S or E of the foothills of the Serranía de San Lucas.

#### **RUFESCENT TIGER-HERON** *Tigrisoma lineatum*

Single adults (possibly the same individual) were observed on 2 and 3 October 1997 in gallery woodland along Quebrada La Fiebre and in a small stream adjoining gallery woodland near the Techint camp, respectively. Previously recorded S to Puerto Berrío in the Magdalena valley.

#### **BARE-FACED IBIS** *Phimosus infuscatus*

Observed several times in the flat alluvial plain of the Río Magdalena N of Honda, including a flock of ca. 35 W of Puerto Romero on 22 September 1997; FGS observed a similar flock near Castilla, S Tolima on 21 October 1993. The species is now widely distributed in the middle Magdalena valley, chiefly in rice-growing areas where it prefers flooded fields. Recorded S only to NW Santander by Hilty & Brown (1986), although they overlooked a 1967 record for Puerto Salgar, Cundinamarca, on the Río Magdalena just N of Honda by Olivares (1969): the species has evidently expanded its range S, probably at least to N Huila, with the removal of the forests in the middle Magdalena valley.

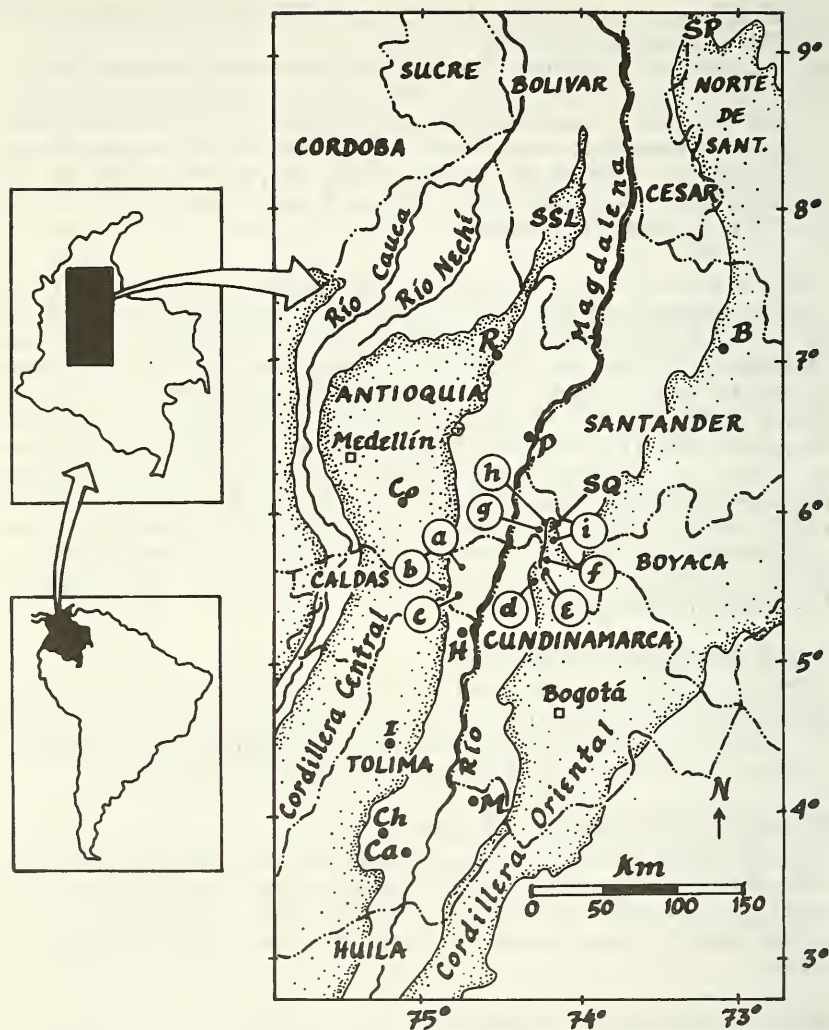


Figure 1. The middle Magdalena valley region, central Colombia, showing important localities mentioned in the text. Circled letters: major study sites (see text). Other localities, listed roughly N to S: SP=Serranía de Perijá; SSL=Serranía de San Lucas; R=Remedios; B=Bucaramanga; P=Puerto Berrio; Co=Cocorná; SQ=Serranía de las Quinchas; H=Honda; I=Ibagué; M=Melgar; Ch=Chaparral; Ca=Castilla. The approximate location of the 1,000 m contour line (with stippling) is indicated to define the major Andean cordilleras.

#### PLUMBEOUS KITE *Ictinia plumbea*

Although this species is very widely distributed in Colombia, there are few records for the Magdalena valley, so a breeding record is of

interest: a pair feeding a recently-fledged juvenile in pasture trees beside a patch of gallery woodland ca. 1 km N Puerto Romero, 21–23 April 1997.

**WHITE HAWK** *Leucopternis albicollis*

An adult of the race *williaminae* was observed perched at close range on a bare snag in forest canopy in the upper part of the La Fiebre watershed on 26 September 1997; the black back with white flecks was clearly visible. Possibly the same individual was seen and heard on several occasions during the preceding and following days. This subspecies had not been recorded S of the Serranía de Perijá or E of the upper Sinú valley W of the Río Cauca.

**BLACK-CHESTED (BARRED) HAWK** *Leucopternis princeps*

On 22 April 1997 FGS recovered a dead adult male with small testes and in heavy moult from a small creek at 650 m in the upper La Fiebre watershed; the specimen was saved, but the cause of death was not determined (it had not been shot). A soaring bird was seen and heard on 1 October 1997 near La Grilla. The only previous record for the western slope of the Eastern Andes was in N Santander (ca. 7°20'N).

**BLACK HAWK-EAGLE** *Spizaetus tyrannus*

Heard and seen on several occasions at La Victoria in March 1994, El Vergel and Monte del Diablo in October–November 1995, La Fiebre in April and October 1997, and La Grilla on 30 September 1997; usually located by its distinctive far-carrying call while soaring. Apparently unrecorded previously on the W slope of the Eastern Andes, or in the Magdalena valley S of the Serranía de San Lucas.

**BARRED FOREST-FALCON** *Micrastur ruficollis*

This species' distinctive 'song' was heard at dawn on 29 and 30 September 1997 in broken forest at La Grilla, and FGS briefly observed an adult in forest understorey along a ridgetop on 1 October 1997. Not previously recorded anywhere in the Magdalena valley, nor on the W slope of the Eastern Andes S of the Serranía de Perijá.

**MARBLED WOOD-QUAIL** *Odontophorus gujanensis*

The distinctive 'corcovado' song of this species was heard repeatedly in the mornings at La Grilla in September 1997, and on 1 October FGS observed at close range a covey of 4+ birds in forest understorey on a steep-sided ridge. No previous records for the W slope of the Eastern Andes S of N Santander; the elevation also is unusually high for the species, which Hilty & Brown (1986) record only to 1,200 m. Interestingly, at lower elevations in the Serranía de las Quinchas, as at La Fiebre, a second species of *Odontophorus* with a very different song (*erythrops*?) was heard frequently in April and twice each in September 1996 and 1997 but not seen.

**GREY-CHESTED DOVE** *Leptotila cassinii*

A bird was observed at very close range in forest understorey at 700 m in the upper La Fiebre watershed on 27 April 1997 by FGS, who

also heard songs of a *Leptotila*, not *verreauxi* and presumably this species, on the previous day in the same area. Not previously recorded S of Puerto Berrío nor E of the Río Magdalena.

**BLACK-AND-WHITE OWL** *Ciccaba nigrolineata*

A single adult was heard calling, located and examined by flashlight at 22:00 h on 3 October by FGS in gallery woodland and adjacent pasture trees near Techint. No previous records of this rarely-reported owl between S Bolívar and S Tolima in the Magdalena valley.

**CRESTED OWL** *Lophostrix cristata*

The distinctive growling call of this owl was heard clearly on the evening of 5 Dec 1998 from tall trees in a forested ravine at La Grilla, but due to the dense vegetation and precipitous terrain FGS was unable to see the bird. The only previous record of this owl in the entire Magdalena Valley region was from the Lebrija valley near Bucaramanga.

**SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWK** *Lurocalis semitorquatus*

FGS saw a single bird coursing at treetop height over a treefall clearing on a forested ridge at Monte del Diablo at dusk on 2 November 1995, and one or two birds over a narrow ravine in the upper La Fiebre watershed at dusk on 24 September 1997; the short tails and batlike flight were very evident, and in both cases the birds were giving the species' characteristic vocalization of repeated, querulous 'wick' notes (cf. Stiles & Skutch 1989). No previous records for the W slope of the Eastern Andes, nor for the Magdalena valley region S of the W base of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta (ca. 10°N). Previous records for the Eastern Andes refer to the larger, more richly-coloured highland form *rufiventris* which has a very different voice (FGS, pers. obs.) and is now often considered a separate species (e.g. Stotz *et al.* 1996).

**SHORT-TAILED SWIFT** *Chaetura brachyura*

This distinctive swift had not been previously recorded S of ca. 7°N in the Magdalena valley, but FGS observed small numbers repeatedly at Guadualito and Monte del Diablo in October–November 1995; FGS and/or CIB regularly observed single birds, pairs or occasional groups of up to 5 on all visits to La Fiebre.

**WHITE-TIPPED SWIFT** *Aeronautes montivagus*

At Hacienda El Silencio, ca. 12 km NW of Ibagué, Tolima, FGS and LR observed ca. 5 birds of this species in a mixed flock of swifts foraging low over a mountain ridge above the Río Combeima at ca. 1,700 m, on 28 March 1993. In the entire Magdalena valley region there is only one previous record from near Bucaramanga, and none from either slope of the Central Andes.

**LESSER SWALLOW-TAILED SWIFT** *Panyptila cayennensis*

FGS observed a pair of this striking swift in a mixed flock of swifts and swallows foraging over pastures and coffee plantations at Gramales,

ca. 5 km S Monte del Diablo on 1 November 1995, apparently the first record for the entire Magdalena valley region.

**LONG-BILLED HERMIT** *Phaethornis longirostris* (species name follows Hinkelman 1996)

FGS found this species common at Norcasia and observed a lek there; observed infrequently at Tasajos by LR and FGS; common to abundant in the La Fiebre watershed during all visits by FGS and CIB; specimens collected at Norcasia and La Fiebre. Previously recorded S to Puerto Berrío.

**BAND-TAILED BARBTHROAT** *Threnetes ruckeri*

Common at El Vergel and Monte del Diablo, uncommon at Tasajos, Norcasia and La Victoria; abundant at La Fiebre, rare at La Grilla. Specimens collected at Tasajos, Norcasia and La Fiebre by FGS and CIB. Previously recorded S to Puerto Berrío.

**VIOLET-HEADED HUMMINGBIRD** *Klais guimeti*

An adult female not in breeding condition, mist-netted and collected at La Grilla on 30 September 1997, represents the first record for the W slope of the Eastern Andes as well as for the entire Magdalena valley region; a second female, in heavy moult, was netted and released at this site on 4 December 1998.

**GREEN THORNTAIL** *Popelairia conversii*

A female was observed at length by FGS at La Victoria (El Boquerón) on 22 March 1994 as it gleaned tiny ants (?) from the bare twigs of a small dead roadside tree adjacent to secondary forest. In addition, Peter G. Kaestner (pers. comm.) observed an adult male near the lower edge of the forest reserve above town in 1989. On 3–5 December 1998, FGS observed several males interacting in treetops at forest edge at La Grilla, and a male in fresh plumage and with enlarged testes was collected on 4 December 1998. Not previously definitely recorded E of the Western Andes, though Olivares (1969) stated vaguely that there were “indications that it had been collected in Yacopí”.

**TODY MOTMOT** *Hylomanes momotula*

An adult was observed closely as it perched quietly about 2 m up in forest understorey by the Río La Miel at Tasajos on 2 June 1990 by LR and B. Ortiz. First record for the Magdalena valley; previously recorded E only to the lower Cauca valley.

**RUFIOUS MOTMOT** *Baryphthengus martii*

Fairly common in the more heavily forested parts of the La Fiebre watershed, with several sightings and tape recordings in April and September 1997. Although recorded S to Honda on the W side of the Río Magdalena, this is apparently the first record E of the river, in the foothills of the Eastern Andes.

**BROAD-BILLED MOTMOT** *Electron platyrynchum*

Heard and seen on several occasions in September–October 1997 in forested parts of the upper La Fiebre watershed. No previous records S of Remedios nor E of the Río Magdalena.

**WHITE-WHISKERED PUFFBIRD** *Malacoptila panamensis*

Uncommon in the forested upper part of the La Fiebre watershed, where FGS collected a male in April and a female in September 1997; CIB also mist-netted one at La Cristalina in September 1996. No previous records S of Remedios nor E of the Río Magdalena.

**WHITE-FRONTED NUNBIRD** *Monasa morphoeus*

Another species previously unrecorded E of the Río Magdalena, where we found it to be fairly common in the upper La Fiebre watershed in April and September 1997.

**WHITE-MANTLED BARBET** *Capito hypoleucus*

This endemic species was considered endangered by Collar *et al.* (1992), and Graves (1987) named the southern, Magdalena valley population *extinctus* in the belief that the extensive forest destruction in the middle Magdalena region had resulted in its extirpation. With B. Ortiz, LR and FGS found several visiting fruiting *Cupania* trees in the forest reserve above La Victoria in May 1990, but FGS failed to record it there in March 1994 (when these trees were not fruiting). On the former date several were also observed in the Río Guarinó gorge above La Victoria. However, in April and September–October 1997 FGS and CIB found the species to be common in the forested upper parts of the La Fiebre watershed and abundant at La Grilla. At the latter locality FGS observed a pair attending a nest on 27 April 1997, and in September–October we observed groups of 4–6 several times daily, visiting a variety of fruiting trees, and obtained tape recordings and four specimens with small gonads and either moulting or in fresh plumage. On 4–5 December 1998, five birds were netted, colour-ringed and released at this site. The Serranía de las Quinchas evidently supports a healthy population that merits more detailed study.

**CHESTNUT/BLACK-MANDIBLED TOUCAN** *Ramphastos swainsonii/ambiguus*

These large toucans were common and vocal in the upper parts of the La Fiebre watershed during our visits in 1996 and 1997, but FGS did not find them at Guadualito or Monte del Diablo; Olivares (1969) suggested that they had been extirpated in Cundinamarca (referring to the subspecies *abbreviatus* of the W slope of the Eastern Andes rather than the east-slope *ambiguus*, although he used the latter name). All individuals observed closely at La Fiebre had pale green or yellow–green facial skin, with the base and gony of the mandible more or less strongly suffused with chestnut or maroon. The mandibles of these individuals were darker than those of ‘typical’ *swainsonii* but hardly solid black, as in nominate *ambiguus* and at least the southern populations of *abbreviatus*. ‘True’ *swainsonii* has been recorded from



the Pacific slope E to the Remedios area (Hilty & Brown 1986), while birds from the Puerto Berrío area, with mandibles apparently resembling those of the La Fiebre birds, have been variously assigned to *swainsonii* or *abbreviatus*, or have been considered to represent hybrids or intergrades (Haffer 1974). Tape recordings of La Fiebre birds sound essentially identical to those made by FGS of *swainsonii* in Costa Rica and Chocó, Colombia. Most recent treatments (e.g. Hilty & Brown 1986) split *swainsonii* from *ambiguus* (including *abbreviatus*), but Haffer (1974) lumped *swainsonii* into *ambiguus*, evidently because of the apparent intergradation between the former and *abbreviatus*. We agree with Haffer to the extent that we consider *swainsonii* and *abbreviatus* to be conspecific, but we feel that *ambiguus* itself, which differs strikingly in soft-part colours and slightly in size (larger) and voice (cf. Hardy *et al.* 1996) might best be considered a separate (allo)species. Although more study, especially of *ambiguus*, is clearly called for, we conclude that if two species were to be recognized, *abbreviatus* should be considered a race of *swainsonii*, not *ambiguus*.

#### CINNAMON WOODPECKER *Celeus loricatus*

Observed twice at Monte del Diablo by FGS, and found to be fairly common in the forested upper La Fiebre watershed by FGS and CIB; not previously recorded S of the vicinity of Bucaramanga in the Magdalena valley.

#### STRONG-BILLED WOODCREEPER *Xiphocolaptes promeropirhynchus*

Several birds were heard calling at dawn and seen in the upper La Fiebre watershed in September 1997 by FGS and CIB; one specimen. Although widely distributed in the Andes, this species is rare below 1,500 m, at least on the W slope where its centre of abundance is above 2,000 m (Hilty & Brown 1986), thus a population at such a low elevation is of interest.

#### BARRED WOODCREEPER *Dendrocolaptes certhia*

At least two birds were observed singing at dawn on 26 September 1997 on one forested ridge of the upper La Fiebre watershed by FGS and CIB; the song, a loud and rather strident series of descending clear whistles similar to the description in Hilty & Brown (1986), seemed to FGS to possess a much less querulous quality than that of the Costa Rican population (cf. Stiles & Skutch 1989). Previously not recorded S of Bucaramanga in the Magdalena valley.

#### BLACK-STRIPED WOODCREEPER *Xiphorhynchus lachrymosus*

Fairly common at Monte del Diablo and in the upper La Fiebre watershed; not previously recorded S of Remedios nor E of the Río Magdalena.

#### RUDDY FOLIAGE-GLEANER *Automolus rubiginosus*

Observed twice and tape-recorded at La Grilla on 29 and 30 September 1997, one specimen collected. Since the collection of the type specimen of the race *sasaimae* by Chapman at Sasaima,

Cundinamarca over 80 years ago, the species has apparently gone unrecorded on the W slope of the Eastern Andes (cf. Olivares 1969); our specimen appears to represent the second known for this race.

**CHECKER-THROATED ANTWRN** *Myrmotherula fulviventris*

Uncommon at El Vergel, fairly common at Monte del Diablo and in the forested upper La Fiebre watershed; specimens from El Vergel and La Fiebre, one also mist-netted at La Grilla. Previously unrecorded S of Remedios or E of the Río Magdalena.

**WHITE-FLANKED ANTWRN** *Myrmotherula axillaris*

Very common at Monte del Diablo, uncommon at El Vergel and in the upper La Fiebre drainage; specimens from Monte del Diablo and La Fiebre. Often in mixed flocks with the preceding species. Not previously recorded S of Bucaramanga in the Magdalena valley.

**SLATY ANTWRN** *Myrmotherula schisticolor*

Fairly common at La Grilla, where we mist-netted three and collected two in September 1997; a pair also observed briefly by FGS on Fila Chapón above Guadualito on 4 November 1995. Apparently the only previous record for the W slope of the Eastern Andes is a specimen collected by Chapman at La Agaudita, Cundinamarca, over 80 years ago.

**STREAKED ANTWRN** *Myrmotherula surinamensis*

Observed and netted at Tasajos in June 1990 by LR and B. Ortiz; a pair regularly seen in riverside trees in the same area in March 1994 by FGS, who also recorded it in tall scrub at Guadualito on 27 October 1995. Previously recorded S only to Bucaramanga in the Magdalena valley.

**DOT-WINGED ANTWRN** *Microrhophias quixensis*

Very uncommon at El Vergel, Monte del Diablo and La Fiebre, where FGS noted pairs accompanying mixed-species flocks along the borders of forest clearings. Not previously recorded S of Remedios nor E of the Río Magdalena.

**CHESTNUT-BACKED ANTBIRD** *Myrmeciza exsul*

Fairly common in old second-growth woodland in the La Fiebre watershed; two specimens with enlarged gonads collected on 28 April 1997. The southernmost previous record in the Magdalena valley was Puerto Berrío.

**BICOLORED ANTBIRD** *Gymnopithys leucaspis*

At least three attended an army ant raid at Monte del Diablo on 2 November 1995; one specimen. Previously unrecorded S of Remedios or on the E side of the Río Magdalena.

**BLACK-FACED ANTTHRUSH** *Formicarius analis*

Heard on several occasions at Monte del Diablo; uncommon to fairly common in primary and old secondary forest in the La Fiebre

watershed, one specimen with enlarged gonads collected on 28 April 1997. Previously recorded S to Puerto Berrío.

**STREAK-CHESTED ANTPITTA** *Hylopezus perspicillatus*

FGS heard this species on several occasions and glimpsed one bird briefly in forest understorey at Monte del Diablo, 2–3 November 1995. Previously recorded S to Bucaramanga.

**CHESTNUT-CROWNED GNATEATER** *Conopophaga castaneiceps*

A male with enlarged gonads collected on 26 April 1997 at La Grilla apparently represents the first record for the W slope of the Eastern Andes N of the head of the Magdalena valley (ca. 2°N).

**BLUE-CROWNED MANAKIN** *Pipra coronata*

Several seen and mist-netted, a pair with enlarged gonads collected in ridgetop forest at Tasajos, 19 March 1994. Previously recorded S only to Remedios.

**ANTIOQUIA BRISTLE-TYRANT** *Phylloscartes lanyoni*

This endemic, threatened species (Collar *et al.* 1992) was uncommon at El Vergel, where FGS collected a male with gonads not enlarged on 31 October 1995; common and tape-recorded at Monte del Diablo where birds were in pairs, usually accompanying mixed-species flocks in the middle levels of the forest, sallying for flying insects or to snatch prey from leaf surfaces, using hanging vines as preferred perches. These are the first records of this species from E of the Río Magdalena. FGS also saw one in the forest reserve above La Victoria on 21 March 1994, and Bret M. Whitney also found the species ca. 10 km W of La Victoria (evidently near Tasajos) and collected a specimen (unfortunately too destroyed by shot to sex) on 25 June 1992. Surprisingly, we did not encounter this species in the Serranía de las Quinchas.

**OLIVACEOUS FLATBILL** *Rhynchocyclus olivaceus*

Uncommon at El Vergel, Monte del Diablo and in the La Fiebre watershed, where FGS observed a nest under construction on 28 April 1997. Specimen taken at El Vergel and La Fiebre. Not previously recorded S of Bucaramanga.

**YELLOW-MARGINED FLYCATCHER** *Tolmomyias assimilis*

Fairly common in forest canopy at La Fiebre and La Cristalina, where CIB and A. Rodríguez took a specimen on 18 September 1996. There appear to be no previous published records for the Magdalena valley, but in the ICN collection are two specimens taken at Cocorná on the W side of the valley in E Antioquia.

**BLACK-TAILED FLYCATCHER** *Myiobius atricaudus*

Uncommon at El Vergel where FGS collected a female with a small ovary on 31 October 1995, and in the La Fiebre watershed, where a male with small testes was collected on 25 September 1997. Previously recorded only W of the Río Magdalena and S to Puerto Berrío.

**SULFUR-RUMPED FLYCATCHER** *Myiobius barbatus*

On two occasions on 2 November 1997, single birds were observed closely by FGS as they accompanied mixed-species flocks in the upper understory of forest at Monte del Diablo. Not previously recorded S of the vicinity of Bucaramanga in the Magdalena valley.

**BLACK-CAPPED PYGMY-TYRANT** *Myiornis atricapillus*

One bird was observed at close range by FGS and CIB as it foraged in roadside trees adjoining old secondary woodland at La Fiebre on 24 September 1997. This easily overlooked species had not been recorded previously S or E of the W side of the Serranía de San Lucas.

**CATTLE TYRANT** *Machetornis rixosus*

Common in pastures and other open areas in the Puerto Romero–Techint area as well as between Puerto Boyacá and Honda, and S at least to S Tolima (Castilla). Previously recorded S only to S Bolívar, this is another open-country species that has apparently expanded its range southward following deforestation of most of the middle Magdalena valley.

**LESSER KISKADEE** *Philohydor lictor*

On 2 October 1997 FGS and CIB observed closely a pair in a scrubby wet pasture near the Techint construction camp. Evidently not recorded S of Remedios nor E of the Río Magdalena, this species may also have expanded its range S and W in the region following forest clearance.

**BRIGHT-RUMPED ATTLA** *Attila spadiceus*

Heard and seen regularly in the La Fiebre watershed (one individual mist-netted on 21 April 1997) and infrequently at La Grilla. Previously recorded S to Puerto Berrío.

**WHITE-THIGGED SWALLOW** *Neochelidon tibialis*

Observed in large numbers in the La Fiebre valley in September 1996 and September–October 1997, but absent in April 1997; possibly the species is migratory in this region. Previously recorded S only to Bucaramanga.

**STRIPE-THROATED WREN** *Thryothorus leucopogon*

Relatively common in dense vegetation along creeks inside forest in the upper La Fiebre drainage, where three specimens, a pair with enlarged gonads and a juvenile, were taken on 20 April 1997. Although Hilty & Brown (1986) adverted its possible presence in the Magdalena valley, there appear to be no previous confirmed records for this species E of S Córdoba.

**BAY WREN** *Thryothorus nigricapillus*

This species was recorded at Norcasia (specimen), La Victoria, Tasajos (specimen), El Vergel (netted) and Monte del Diablo; it had

previously been found S only to S Bolívar in the Magdalena valley region.

**SOOTY-HEADED WREN** *Thryothorus spadix*

This species, nearly endemic to Colombia, was previously known S only to C Santander and the N boundary of Caldas. We found it to be fairly common at Tasajos (specimen), La Victoria (two specimens), Guadualito (two specimens), El Vergel and Monte del Diablo.

**PALE-VENTED THRUSH** *Turdus obsoletus*

A male with testes not enlarged was collected on 26 September 1997 in forest at 680 m in the upper La Fiebre watershed. This apparently represents the first record for the Magdalena valley N of the head of the valley in S Huila; the status (whether residents or migrants) and subspecific allocation of birds from this region remain to be determined.

**TAWNY-FACED GNATWREN** *Microbatas cinereiventris*

Uncommon at Monte del Diablo (specimen) and in the upper La Fiebre forests (netted) and at La Grilla (specimen); in both areas usually seen with mixed-species flocks in forest understorey. Previously recorded S to Puerto Berrío.

**YELLOW-BROWED SHRIKE-VIREO** *Vireolanus eximius*

Given the paucity of previous records for this species in the Magdalena valley (cf. Olivares 1969, Hilty & Brown 1986), it seems worth emphasizing that we found it quite common at La Victoria, Guadualito, El Vergel, Monte del Diablo (specimen), La Fiebre and La Grilla and uncommon at Norcasia and Tasajos. Its green colouration and preference for the upper canopy render the species inconspicuous until its persistent song is learned; it is generally common wherever patches of remnant forest persist.

**LESSER GREENLET** *Hylophilus decurtatus*

Recorded by FGS at El Vergel and Monte del Diablo, and by FGS and CIB at La Fiebre; a specimen was taken on 19 September 1996 at La Cristalina by CIB and A. Rodríguez. Previously recorded S to the Bucaramanga area.

**YELLOW ORIOLE** *Icterus nigrogularis*

Fairly common at Techint and Puerto Romero, where FGS found a nest under construction in April 1997; FGS and LR have found it to be common at least as far S as Melgar, and FGS observed one or two individuals briefly near Castilla, S Tolima on 21 October 1993. Hilty & Brown (1986) record it S to Puerto Berrío, but they evidently overlooked a 1967 record for Puerto Salgar, just N of Honda, by Olivares (1969); apparently this species is another that has expanded its range S following forest clearance.

**GREY-THROATED WARBLER** *Basileuterus cinereicollis*

This species, restricted to the Eastern Andes and the Serranía de Perijá in Colombia and adjacent Venezuela, was considered "near-threatened" by Collar *et al.* (1992). It is therefore worth noting that we found it fairly common during all visits to La Grilla in understorey of forest and adjacent tall second growth, collecting a female with a granular ovary on 29 September 1996, an immature male on 26 April 1997 and a male with small testes on 25 September 1997.

**FULVOUS-VENTED EUPHONIA** *Euphonia fulvicrissa*

This species was common at Tasajos (netted), La Victoria and La Fiebre, where a nest under construction was noted by FGS on 24 April 1997, and uncommon at Monte del Diablo. Previously recorded S only to Remedios and Bucaramanga.

**TURQUOISE DACNIS-TANAGER** *Pseudodacnis hartlaubi*

This endemic species, considered threatened by Collar *et al.* (1992), had been recorded only in three widely separated areas of the Colombian Andes, the closest being W Cundinamarca (W of Bogotá). FGS and CIB observed closely an adult male actively gleaning insects in the canopies of several *Albizzia carbonaria* trees along forest edge at 1,330 m at La Grilla on 28 September 1997; a short while later on the same date a female was observed among various other tanagers and barbets eating fruit of a large *Coussapoa* tree, also at forest edge. An adult male was observed briefly on 4 December 1998, and an immature female netted and collected the following day in the same area. Although these were our only observations, given the generally good state of the habitat at La Grilla, it is possible that the Serranía de las Quinchas harbours an important population of this rare species.

**YELLOW-BACKED TANAGER** *Hemithraupis flavicollis*

This species was fairly common at Tasajos, La Victoria (specimen), Monte del Diablo and La Fiebre, where a pair was observed building a nest in the upper canopy on a forested ridge at 670 m on 27 September 1997. Previously recorded S to Bucaramanga in the Magdalena valley.

**SOOTY ANT-TANAGER** *Habia gutturalis*

Because this endemic species was considered "near-threatened" by Collar *et al.* (1992), it is worth noting that we found it common to abundant at La Victoria (two specimens), Guadualito, Monte del Diablo, El Vergel and La Fiebre (three specimens), and fairly common at Tasajos and Norcasia. It occurs in both primary and older secondary forest.

**TAWNY-CRESTED TANAGER** *Tachyphonus delatryi*

Found by LR, FGS and B. Ortiz frequently in flocks of up to *ca.* 12 in the forest reserve above La Victoria in May 1990, but only seen once in March 1994; may move locally, perhaps into the adjacent Guarín gorge. Previously recorded S to Remedios.

**WHITE-SHOULDERED Tanager** *Tachyphonus luctuosus*

Previously recorded S to Honda in the Magdalena valley, but FGS found it fairly common in remnant patches of forest and adjacent shaded coffee plantations at El Limón, ca. 5 km SW of Chaparral, Tolima, collecting a male there on 23 October 1993. The species was also common at El Vergel, Monte del Diablo, Tasajos, La Victoria and La Fiebre.

**DUSKY-FACED Tanager** *Mitrospingus cassinii*

Fairly common at Tasajos, where FGS took two specimens on 18–19 March 1994; several also seen in the Río Guarinó gorge near La Victoria on 30 May 1990 by FGS, LR and B. Ortiz. These are the first records for the Magdalena valley, the species previously having been recorded E only to the Río Nechí.

**BLUE-BLACK GROSBEAK** *Cyanocompsa cyanooides*

Locally common in forest understorey and adjacent old second growth at Tasajos, La Victoria (specimen), Guadualito (netted), El Vergel (specimen), Monte del Diablo, La Fiebre (specimen); uncommon at La Grilla (netted). LRS and B. Ortiz also collected a specimen (J) near Marquetalia, Caldas (5°23'N, 75°4'W) on 15 December 1989. Previously recorded only S to Remedios.

**LINED SEEDEATER** *Sporophila lineola*

A pair of this species was seen repeatedly by FGS in the vicinity of the Techint camp between 18 and 28 April 1997 in the company of numerous other seedeaters, especially Ruddy *S. minuta*. The male's broad white pileal stripe clearly identified it as this species—not previously recorded W of the Andes—rather than the expected Lesson's Seedeater *S. bouvronides*.

**LARGE-BILLED SEED-FINCH** *Oryzoborus crassirostris*

FGS observed a pair of this species repeatedly in scrubby pastures near the Techint camp in April 1997; he also collected a moulting male (J) on 5 June 1990 in a scrubby field at Melgar, Tolima. Not previously recorded S of S Cesar in the Magdalena valley, this is probably another species that has expanded its range S with deforestation. Although we have never found *O. crassirostris* numerous at any site, we do not agree with Collar *et al.* (1992) in considering it to be “near-threatened”.

**SAFFRON FINCH** *Sicalis flaveola*

Because Hilty & Brown (1986) do not record it S of about 8°N in the Magdalena valley region and Olivares (1969) records for Cundinamarca only a single vagrant occurrence in Bogotá, we note that the species has evidently expanded its range S in recent years and is now numerous throughout the Magdalena valley at least as far S as S Tolima (Castilla, Chaparral), ascending regularly to (and presumably breeding, at least locally) in the Sabana de Bogotá at ca. 2600 m. We recorded it commonly at Techint, Puerto Romero and La Victoria in the present

study, and three specimens (J) were collected by FGS at Melgar on 4–5 June 1990.

### Concluding remarks

The records presented here mostly fall into two broad classes: forest species previously unrecorded in the Magdalena valley or not recorded so far S and/or W therein, or open-country species that have evidently expanded their distributions S in response to the deforestation of the middle part of the valley. The former group of records highlights the paucity of field work in this region in recent decades, as well as the importance of patches of remnant forest for the conservation of a number of endemic or poorly-known species. In particular, the Serranía de las Quinchas, with essentially the only well-preserved cloud forest and the largest block of lowland wet forest in the region, emerges as an important area for further study and a strong candidate for protective measures. The Río Ermitaño watershed in the interior of the Serranía is of difficult access (we have not yet been able to visit this area) but contains a block of some 50,000 ha of relatively pristine humid forest which, according to local hunters, still harbours 'paujiles'—presumably *Crax alberti*, whose situation is considered critical by Collar *et al.* (1992)—and possibly other endemics of the region that we did not record at La Fiebre or La Grilla (e.g. *Clytactantes alixii*, *Phylloscartes lanyoni*). The second block of records highlights the ability of many open-country species to expand their ranges rapidly when forest barriers are removed, as has also been noted in other areas of the Neotropics like Costa Rica (Stiles & Skutch 1989).

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## New and less known birds from Libya

by Bruno Massa

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Birds of Libya are less well known than those living in other north African countries. Since Bundy's (1976) review, few papers on the birds of Libya have been published: Misonne (1973), Willcox & Willcox (1978), Cowan (1982, 1983, 1985), Meininger *et al.* (1994a, 1994b, 1996). Between 4 and 16 April 1998, I visited coastal Libya and the following are the most notable records among the 89 species observed during the return trip from the Tunisia-Libya to the Libya-Egypt frontier.

### BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *Elanus caeruleus*

One migrating W-E near New Al Hishah on 5 April. Previously not reported for Libya (Bundy 1976), but well known as breeding in Tunisia and Egypt.

### LAPPET-FACED VULTURE *Torgos tracheliotus*

One pair between Tokrah and Tolmeita on 7 April; 1 individual larger, presumably the female, rested on a high tension pylon, the other flew over and performed a spectacular display, diving rapidly towards it